

2021 SESSION REPORT TO THE 21ST LEGISLATIVE DISTRICT



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June 2021

Dear Friends and Neighbors,

The 2021 legislative session was focused on ensuring an equitable and lasting recovery from the economic and health impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. The past year was challenging for Washington's families, small businesses, educators, students, front-line healthcare workers, those most in need, and those painfully affected by systemic racism.

Yet, despite the pandemic and a remote session, we passed historic budgets and new laws that will make real advancements at responding not only to the urgent needs of our community, but also to existing unjust inequities uncovered by the pandemic.

Keep reading for budget highlights and priorities like racial justice, police accountability, climate action, education, and worker protections.

Next session, we hope COVID-19 will be behind us and we will return to Olympia to advocate on your behalf. Please reach out to our offices if you have questions or need help accessing services. It is our honor to serve as your state legislators.

Sincerely,

**Save the date:
TELEPHONE
TOWN HALL
ON MONDAY,
JUNE 28 @
5:30 PM**



We will discuss work accomplished in the 2021 session and what we will be working on during the interim. But most of all, we want to hear from you. Ask us questions live over the phone or submit them in advance to: surveymonky.com/r/21stTownHall

Residents will get a call a few minutes before the event inviting them to join. If you don't get the call but want to participate, please dial **877-229-8493** and enter code **116357**.

You can also livestream the event at vekeo.com/WHDC21

2021 REPORT TO THE 21ST DISTRICT

SENATOR MARKO LIAS

It was an absolute honor to serve another session as your state senator in the 21st District, as well as the Senate Democratic Caucus Majority Floor Leader. Even during such a unique legislative session, the highlight of this position is getting to hear from you all about your passions and how you want to make a difference in our communities. Thank you to everyone who made their voice heard by contacting my office, testifying in front of committee, and sharing your perspectives!

Protecting Washington for the next generations



In the Senate Environment, Energy & Technology committee, we worked hard to preserve Washington's natural environment for years to come by addressing the climate crisis with some of the most comprehensive policy in the nation. The **HEAL Act (SB 5141)** defines environmental justice in state law, outlines how

agencies should consider community needs in their work, and centers communities of color who have long been on the front lines of the climate crisis, living in neighborhoods that suffer the worst from pollution.

With the transportation sector in our state making up 45 percent of total emissions, it is also critical that we transition away from fossil fuels and toward renewables. Passage of **the Low Carbon Fuel Standard (HB 1091)** means Washington will join other West Coast neighbors to decrease emissions from the transportation sector by promoting clean fuels.

Additionally, the **Climate Commitment Act (SB 5126)** will work to decrease emissions across all sectors while putting in place deadlines for electrification. Other legislation was also passed **to reduce the use of plastics (SB 5022)** in our state and invest in **wildfire recovery** and resistance efforts (**HB 1168**) as we have seen increasingly devastating fires throughout Washington.

Investing in Higher Education

In the Higher Education committee, I championed the **Our Colleges, Our Future Act (SB 5194)** which made needed investments to increase and promote diversity in our community and technical colleges. This will ensure students who enter the Community and Technical College system have a higher chance of graduating with a degree by promoting programs that have a proven degree completion track record. It also adds 200 full time professors and creates a grant program for more mental health counselors ensuring that students are supported inside and out of the classroom.

We also passed legislation to require **diversity, equity, inclusion, and anti-racism trainings** and assessments at higher education institutions to ensure students have an equitable education (**SB 5227**), legislation to **expand access to the homeless and foster care college students** pilot program (**HB 1166**), legislation to allow community and technical colleges to offer **bachelor's degrees in computer science (SB 5401)**, and more.



Gender Affirming Treatment Act

As the co-chair of the LGBTQ caucus, one of my biggest accomplishments from this session **was passing the Gender Affirming Treatment Act (SB 5313)**. As we near the end of this year's LGBTQ+ Pride month and celebrating all the amazing advocates that have fought for their rights, I'm reflecting on all the work that still needs to be done to support queer folks in our state. This legislation will change the lives of transgender and gender-nonconforming Washingtonians by requiring insurance providers to cover gender affirming care. It's an important step to ensure LGBTQ+ folks across the state can access necessary and life-changing medical procedures, and it was guided by the work of incredible activists in our trans community!

REP. LILLIAN ORTIZ-SELF

This year we had the largest cohort of legislators of color in the history of our state and this is the first time that four members of color serve as Majority Caucus chairs and vice-chairs in both chambers. After serving as caucus vice-chair since 2017, I am deeply honored my colleagues elected me as their chair last fall and I couldn't be more proud of the work we accomplished together.



Helping Our Kids Thrive

As a school counselor and a member of the House Education Committee, my top priority is to provide students with the tools, opportunities and support they need to succeed. Among other measures, this session we passed bills to:

- **Expand student access to digital tools (HB 1365)** to address the technological divide in our state, which the pandemic made more evident than ever before.
- Acknowledge the challenges of race relations in our school system by providing **anti-racism training (SB 5044)** for teachers and staff, and **ending the derogatory use** of Native Americans as school mascots (**HB 1356**).
- **Address lead in school drinking water (HB 1139)** by testing all public school faucets used for drinking or food preparation and repair the pipes and fixtures where elevated levels of lead are found.

The governor also signed my two education bills:

- **HB 1113** - Promoting **consistent school attendance** by using community engagement boards and wraparound services to avoid court involvement and encouraging districts and families to work together to get students back on track.
- **HB 1363** - Providing resources to **address secondary traumatic stress** experienced by teachers, as they often have to act as first responders for students who need support.

Ensuring Everyone Gets a Fair Shake

All Washingtonians should have the opportunity for success, especially those who need extra support. That's why our efforts in the House Children, Youth and Families Committee were focused on:

Addressing the urgent need for childcare and early learning programs by passing the **Fair Start for Kids Act (SB 5237)** to make childcare more affordable, expand the childcare workforce, and strengthen prevention and intervention services.

Creating **evidence-based approaches to reentry (HB 1186)** with community transition services for young people nearing the end of their confinement to serve out the remainder of their sentence in the community while on electronic monitoring.

I also had two bills in this committee that made it to Governor Inslee's desk:

- **HB 1227** - Child and parent outcomes are better when we invest in keeping families together. This legislation **strengthens and stabilizing families** by protecting children from undue family separation.
- **HB 1194** – This bill helps **address inherent biases present in the parent-child visitation process** during child dependency proceedings to ensure that visits actually happen and take place in the most appropriate setting.

Supporting Workers

This year I joined the House Labor and Workplace Standards Committee, where we passed measures that put working families first, including:

Strengthening Washington's anti-retaliation protections (HB 1097) for workers who report unsafe workplace conditions.

Expanding **Paid Family & Medical Leave (PFML)** access & coverage:

- **HB 1073** - Allows families who were not eligible as a result of job losses to **use their 2019 hours worked to qualify** for PFML benefits.
- **SB 5097** - **Redefines "family" to include individuals not related by blood or marriage** so workers can receive PFML benefits while caring for loved ones they consider family.

Extending **overtime pay to ALL agricultural workers (SB 5172)**. As of January 1, 2024, any work beyond 40 hours a week will be paid as overtime.



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REP. STROM PETERSON

Chairing the new Housing, Human Services & Veterans Committee



This year I had the great honor to serve as chair of this important new committee. Working with my colleagues on the both sides of the aisle, we passed significant legislation to help ensure a just, equitable and lasting recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic, including:

- A bill I introduced ([HB 1220](#)) to require local government planning for housing for people of **all income levels**

and **addressing racial disparities and displacement.**



- **Relocation assistance** for tenants of closed or converted manufactured/mobile home parks ([HB 1083](#)).
- Requiring landlords to cite **a reason for ending someone's rental tenancy** and prohibiting no-cause 20-day eviction notices to help make sure we can end the eviction moratorium without an immediate flood of eviction filings ([HB 1236](#)).
- **Eviction Prevention Rental Assistance** Program ([HB 1277](#)) to keep people housed and make sure landlords can pay their bills.
- A first-in-the-nation guarantee of legal representation for renters in eviction cases ([HB 5160](#)).

Keeping Food on the Table

The pandemic caused food insecurity and hunger to explode in our community and around the state. We know that hungry kids cannot learn, so we passed [HB 1342](#) to **eliminate school lunch co-pays**. I was also proud to partner with my colleagues in the informal Food Fighters caucus to secure historic investments that will help Washington families keep healthy food on the table, including **\$124 million in food assistance programs** and over **\$26 million in grants for hunger relief organizations like food banks and pantries**. These investments include:



- **\$45 million** in one-time federal funds to create a state **'farmers to families food boxes' program**. It remains unclear whether this federal program will continue into the future, so you can count on me to advocate strongly to our federal partners to support the program.
- **\$5 million** in one-time federal funds for **farm to school grants to help school purchase ingredients from local growers for school meals**. Child hunger has greatly increased during the pandemic. Being able to purchase fresh, healthy ingredients will not only help schools feed kids, it will also make sure that the food they have serve is nutritious.
- **\$8 million** in one-time federal funds for **Food Infrastructure and Market Access grants**. The pandemic has shifted food distribution channels and this funding will help support smaller growers and producers to be able to pivot to different models such as farmers markets.

Supporting Kids and Families



This year I supported [HB 1151](#) to aid in pandemic-related economic recovery by **allowing Consolidated Emergency Assistance to be given out more than once in a 12-month period**. This cash payment is one of the only state assistance programs available to people regardless of immigration status. It also implements a transition period to avoid the "food benefits cliff" which occurs when a small increase in income makes someone ineligible for food assistance.

I also voted for [SB 5214](#) to make sure **Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF)** recipients can continue receiving benefits beyond their 60-month time limit, for the same amount of months unemployment was over the 7 percent threshold. TANF recipients shouldn't be penalized during difficult economic times when everyone is struggling to find work.

Our Budget Puts People First



Before the pandemic and Stay Home, Stay Healthy orders pushed Washington's economy into a downturn, our state had a strong economy and social safety net. A historic **\$59.2 billion Operating Budget**

([SB 5092](#)) was approved to help our economy recover equitably from the pandemic. The Washington Recovery Budget included monumental investments in public health, education, human services, childcare to provide more families access to quality and affordable programs, and more. Here are some of the highlights:

- **15 percent increase** toward the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families program.
- **\$340 million** for the Immigrant Relief Fund.
- **\$172 million** for expanded Paid Leave Coverage.
- **Property tax deferrals** for businesses that lost significant revenue during the pandemic.
- Nearly **\$300 million in small business grants** and **\$2.2 billion in unemployment insurance rate cuts** over the next four years.
- More than **\$1.3 billion for public health** funding for vaccine distribution, contact tracing, and testing.
- **\$48 million to fund student learning devices and broadband connectivity**, plus **\$237 million to support student learning recovery programs** to help ensure our students do not fall behind due to the challenges of remote learning.
- **\$207 million for improved Medicaid funding** for seniors and people with disabilities.
- Landlord and rental assistance with **\$983 million to pay back due rent** and nearly **\$200 million in landlord and mortgage foreclosure** assistance.

We also funded the **Working Families Tax Exemption** ([HB 1297](#)), which puts money back in the pockets of thousands of qualifying families across the state.

The **Capital Gains Excise Tax** ([SB 5096](#)) on **high-earners** and **extraordinary profits** will be paid by only 0.2 percent of taxpayers in our district, that's around 170 people. But it will help correct our broken tax structure that forces working families to fund a disproportionate share of the programs and services our communities need, while wealthy Washingtonians pay significantly less.

Racial Justice and Police Accountability

We are committed to examining systemic bias in our state and working to build trust between law enforcement and the community. This year we set expectations for how law enforcement interacts with the public and we established systems of accountability and transparency, including:

- **Preventing wrongful convictions:** [HB 1223](#), by **Rep. Strom Peterson**, requires electronic recording of custodial interrogations related to a felony or involving a juvenile.
- **Police tactics:** [HB 1054](#) bans chokeholds, neck restraints, and no-knock warrants; restricts vehicular pursuits and firing on a moving vehicle, and the use of tear gas and certain military equipment; and requires officers to be identifiable when in uniform.
- **Use of force:** [HB 1310](#) creates a statewide use of force standard that mandates de-escalation and a standard of reasonable care when officers use force.
- **Independent investigations:** [HB 1267](#) creates an independent agency—separate from police agencies—to investigate deadly uses of force.
- **State oversight and accountability:** [SB 5051](#) will increase trust in law enforcement by standardizing and expediting ways for problem officers to be removed from the profession.
- **Duty to intervene and report:** [SB 5066](#) requires officers to report wrongdoing and intervene if a colleague uses excessive or unnecessary force.



Additional measures to advance racial equity:

- **Banning private prisons** ([HB 1090](#)): This measure, introduced by **Rep. Ortiz-Self**, directs the Northwest Detention Center in Tacoma, the state's only private prison, to close when its contract with Immigration and Customs Enforcement ends, in 2025.
- Making **Juneteenth** a state holiday ([HB 1016](#))
- **Restoring voting rights** for formerly incarcerated individuals ([HB 1078](#))

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SENATOR MARKO LIAS • REP. LILLIAN ORTIZ-SELF • REP. STROM PETERSON

CAPITAL BUDGET

Creating jobs now to build the future we want

The 2021-23 Capital Budget ([HB 1080](#)) makes historic investments in communities across our state and will put tens of thousands of people to work rebuilding the economy. We're making investments in our future by building broadband internet infrastructure in rural and underserved communities, constructing a behavioral health teaching facility, and building desperately needed affordable housing.

Investments in the 21st District

- Edmonds Marsh restoration: **\$258,000**
- Edmonds Waterfront Center: **\$250,000**
- Mukilteo Japanese Gulch daylighting: **\$206,000**



TRANSPORTATION BUDGET

Bringing us together and moving toward a sustainable future

The **\$11.8 billion** Transportation Budget ([SB 5165](#)) will continue to fund major work that was put on hold due to the pandemic and includes new initiatives

to create a more diverse transportation workforce along with funding for a more sustainable transportation system with electrification, charging stations, and hybrid ferries.

Investments in the 21st District

- SR 99 Revitalization in Edmonds: **\$15.1 million**
- SR 525 Pedestrian & Traffic Improvements: **\$1.2 million**
- Edmonds & Mukilteo Ferry Terminals Improvements: **\$453,000**

